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World Youth Report 2005

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 58/133 of 20 December 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide it at its sixtieth session, through the Commission for Social Development at its forty-third session, with a comprehensive report, including an evaluation of the implementation since 1995 of the priority areas identified in the World Programme of Action. It also asked the Secretary-General, inter alia, in preparing the report, to bear in mind the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men, the use of and access to information and communication technologies, the dramatic increase of HIV infections among young people and the impact of the epidemic on their lives, the active involvement of young people in armed conflict, both as victims and as perpetrators, and the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in an ageing society, and to include these issues in an annex to the report. The present report, and its annex, respond to these requests. Recommendations on these issues are found throughout the text and are rendered in bold type. Concluding recommendations on global youth policies are contained in section III of the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report presents an overview of the global situation of young people on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

2. Between 1995 and 2005, the global youth population, defined as persons between 15 and 24 years of age, has grown from 1,025 million to 1,153 million. Young people currently comprise 18 per cent of the world population. Of all youth worldwide, 85 per cent live in developing countries, reflecting a small increase since 1995.[1]

3. In addition to the youth cohort, children below age 15 comprise another 30 per cent of the total global population. If these two groups are taken together, those below 24 years of age comprise almost half the world population. While the growth in the combined share of these two groups has slowed over the past 10 years, in absolute numbers there are more young people than ever before.

4. It is important to note that the young generation that witnessed the adoption of the World Programme of Action in 1995 has by now been completely replaced by a new generation of young men and women. Each of the 10 issues that were included in the World Programme of Action remains relevant for both current and future generations of young people worldwide. Some important trends on each of these concerns will be described in section II below.

5. However, it should be recognized that there have been many economic and social changes in the global environment since 1995. Thus, at least five additional issues of concern to young people have appeared: globalization; the increased use of information and communication technology, both having disproportional effects on young people's lives; the spread of HIV/AIDS; the increased participation of young people in armed conflict, both as victims and perpetrators; and the growing importance of intergenerational relations in an ageing global society. These five new concerns were presented in the World Youth Report 2003,[2] and were subsequently noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/133. They will be highlighted in the annex to the present report.

6. Currently, three main clusters of issues in which young people grow up and become members of their societies may be identified. Each reflects some of the 10 issues that were identified in the World Programme of Action, as well as the five new issues discussed above. Together they form a comprehensive environment for most young people, despite differences in cultures, societies and communities. The three clusters are described as: (a) youth in the global economy, including issues such as hunger and poverty, education, employment, globalization and information and communication technologies; (b) youth in civil society, related to concerns of environment, leisure, participation and intergenerational relations; and (c) youth at risk, encompassing the priority areas of health, drug abuse, delinquency, conflict and HIV/AIDS.

7. The five new issues affect each of these three clusters in different ways. Globalization is affecting the international division of labour everywhere, and young people are among the first groups to feel an impact from changes in international trade and investment, both positively and negatively. Information and communication technology is changing the way youth interact in both civil society

and the global economy. New intergenerational relations are changing the ways in which young people participate in civil society. The rise in violent conflicts around the world and the dramatic spread of HIV/AIDS suddenly put millions of youth at risk.

8. Adopted five years after the World Programme of Action, the Millennium Development Goals can be interpreted as a new set of internationally agreed targets aimed at young people. Most of the Millennium Development Goals are directly related either to children and the youth of the next generation or to issues of great concern to young people, such as maternal health and HIV/AIDS.

9. National reviews of progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth were received from Azerbaijan, Finland, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden and Uganda. Those reviews have been used throughout the present report.

II. Review of the 10 priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

A. Youth in the global economy: poverty, education and employment

10. Sustainable economic development depends upon the participation of young people in the productive sectors of society. Achieving the goals of quality education and decent work for all young people has become increasingly determined by global market forces. The challenge for policy makers is to support youth with programmes and policies that empower them to partake in the benefits of globalization and the spread of information and communication technologies, while protecting them from negative consequences of the globalized economy. In this section, the priority areas of poverty, education and employment are reviewed. The topics of globalization and information and communication technologies will be reviewed in the annex to the present report.

1. Poverty

11. It is estimated that currently almost 209 million young people, or 18 per cent of all youth, live on less than $1 a day, and 515 million young people, or nearly 45 per cent, live on less than $2 a day. South Asia has the largest number of youth living below these two poverty lines, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. Using a different indicator, these regions are also home to the largest concentrations of undernourished young people.[3]

Table 1
Estimates of the numbers of youth, age 15-24, living in poverty in 2005, in millions

Region	*Less than $1/day*	*Less than $2/day*	*Undernourished*
South Asia	84.1	206.1	57.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	60.7	102.1	39.9
East Asia and the Pacific	46.5	150.5	38.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	11.1	27.2	10.8
Middle East and North Africa	2.0	12.1	7.1
Europe and Central Asia	4.1	18.2	5.8
World[a]	**208.6**	**515.1**	**160.1**

Source: R. Curtain, *Youth in Extreme Poverty: Dimensions and Policy Implications with Particular Focus on South-East Asia* (Melbourne, 2004); see also footnote 3.

[a] The total does not exactly reflect the total of the regions due to rounding.

12. Since age groups overlap and children become youths, there is value in studying child poverty indicators as well. It has been argued that it is insufficient to base estimates of childhood poverty only on household income, expenditure or consumption profiles. Moreover, it is generally agreed that poverty is also characterized by limited access to public services, such as a safe water supply, roads, health care and education. Thus, based on a set of indicators of severe deprivation of basic human needs, an alternative measure of child poverty has been derived.[4] Although designed to measure poverty among children up to age 18, it serves as an indicative measurement for poverty among youth as well.

13. Using this set of indicators, it is estimated that over one third of all children in developing countries are living in absolute poverty, with the highest rates of 65 per cent, or 207 million children, in sub-Saharan Africa, and 59 per cent, or 330 million children, in South Asia. Rates are lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean and East Asia and the Pacific, with 17 and 7 per cent, respectively. Rural children face significantly higher levels of poverty than urban children, with rates for absolute poverty of 70 per cent or higher in both rural sub-Saharan Africa and rural South Asia. Severe deprivation of shelter and sanitation are the problems affecting the highest proportion of children in the developing world, mainly in rural areas.[5]

14. Most poverty in developing countries is concentrated in rural areas, especially among small farmers and landless families. Much urban poverty in its turn is the consequence of rural deprivation and economic decline, which creates distress migration to the cities. The World Programme of Action for Youth put a strong emphasis on rural development. Actions focused on making farming more rewarding and life in agricultural areas more attractive. Poverty reduction efforts need to have an explicit agricultural growth strategy in place. However, over the past 10 years, there has been a sharp decline in the resources, both national and international, devoted to agricultural and rural development in developing countries.[6]

15. There is increased recognition that investing in youth can be beneficial to poverty alleviation efforts. Youth are increasingly consulted in drafting poverty

reduction strategy papers, and they are also increasingly identified as a major group affected by poverty. Of the 31 poverty reduction strategy papers completed between May 2002 and September 2003, 17 give major attention to youth in their action plans. The focus in these plans is mostly on education and employment. Despite this positive trend, only six poverty reduction strategy papers have specifically identified youth as a group in poverty, and only 16 per cent of the strategy papers view young people as a focus for integrated interventions.

16. While these developments are positive, most poverty alleviation efforts still do not fully integrate concerns related to youth poverty into national growth strategies that include infrastructure development and agricultural policy changes targeted at the poor. **Youth should be mainstreamed into poverty reduction strategies, emphasizing the importance of poverty reduction among youth to the socio-economic development of the country. Young people should be consulted in the process of policy development. Such an integrated approach should include all priority issues identified in the World Programme of Action for Youth as being relevant to the national situation.**

17. **Rural youth should be at the forefront of interventions aimed at reducing poverty and stemming the current large-scale migration of young people to urban areas.** Commitments made in the World Programme of Action for Youth in this regard should be implemented and supported by agriculture credit schemes for young people. Specific educational curricula focusing on the needs of rural youth can enhance their skills. However, such developments cannot fully succeed without structural agricultural transformation on a global level, including access to markets and sharing of new technologies.

18. **There is a need for more quantitative and qualitative research on poverty alleviation among youth. Making a thorough analysis of the specific characteristics of youth poverty remains difficult due to the lack of age-disaggregated data, and most poverty research does not specifically focus on young people. There is a strong need for prior acknowledgement of the needs of youth and for research on and consultation with youth as prerequisites for their inclusion in national poverty strategies.** Suggested topics of research include the collection of longitudinal data on youth in poverty, the role of youth in the intergenerational transmission of poverty, the characteristics of the transition from school to work, the collection of longitudinal information on the labour market experiences of youth, the extent and nature of the involvement of young people in the informal sector and in underemployment, and the potential for Governments to facilitate youth employment.

2. Education

19. Since 1995, the number of young people completing primary school has continued to increase. Secondary school gross enrolments on a global level increased from 56 to 78 per cent in the last decade.[7] Also, tertiary enrolment rates increased worldwide from 69 million in 1990 to 88 million in 1997, with the largest growth achieved in developing countries.[8] Some countries even doubled net enrolment rates between 1990 and the beginning of the new century. The current generation of young people is the best educated ever.

20. Unfortunately, not all countries have been successful in providing education to their young people. A few countries witnessed contraction in enrolment during the

1990s, followed by only moderate increases since 2000. In some countries with economies in transition, primary education is regressing, indicating that achieving primary education for all is tied to socio-economic circumstances. Despite the progress achieved, 113 million primary school-age children were not in school in 2000.[9] These children will become the next generation of illiterate youth, replacing the current group of an estimated 130 million.

21. Poverty is a major barrier to schooling. When poor parents need to make a choice, girls tend to be excluded first from attending school. The gap between male and female literacy rates in Asia and Africa appears to be widening. The greatest gender inequalities exist in the region of Western Asia and North Africa, where educationally deprived girls outnumber boys by almost 3 to 1.[10] In the East Asia and Pacific region, gender equality in access to education is almost equal, whereas in Latin America and the Caribbean, there appears to be a slight bias against boys. In rural areas, young people have less access to education, the quality of education is poorer and adult illiteracy is higher.

22. Apart from making education available to all, emphasis should be focused on enhancing the quality of education. Abolition of school fees has stimulated school enrolment but can have negative implications for the quality of education. Experience in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa proves that without additional funding for qualified teachers and material resources, schools are not able to accommodate the larger numbers of students who have increasingly enrolled. Teachers and trainers in many parts of the world lack sufficient training, resources, support, materials and conditions conducive to service, which decreases the effectiveness of young people's learning.

23. Globalization and the technological revolution, complicated by growing global inequalities, require new responses to the educational needs of youth. Educational curricula do not always adequately prepare youth to meet the demands of the labour market. It has been estimated that roughly 10 to 20 per cent of the learning needs of the general population in developed countries are not adequately met by current formal learning systems.[11] Developing countries face major challenges in introducing new information and communication technologies in the educational system. **Urgent attention is needed to prevent the digital divide between developed and developing countries from widening in the next generation.**

24. Education has long been regarded as the primary solution to poverty. The World Declaration on Education for All, launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, established the commitment of the international community to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade. The World Programme of Action for Youth adopted education as the first of 10 priority areas for youth development. The Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000, identified six major goals for education, two of which became Millennium Development Goals later that year: (a) to ensure that by 2015, all children will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; and (b) to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015.

25. In addition, international efforts have been targeted mainly at the education of girls and young women. A number of major international projects and activities are focusing on strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Project, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General, has specific

task forces focusing on education. In 2002, the World Bank launched the fast-track initiative to provide quick and incremental technical and financial support to countries that have policies in place but are not on track to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Nine flagship inter-agency programmes were put in place by UNESCO. Although there have been some positive developments in financing basic education, both bilateral and multilateral aid to education decreased between 1998/99 and 2000/01. The current level of international assistance to basic education appears to be insufficient to reach universal primary education by 2015.

26. Most States have included the right to education in their constitutions. Ultimately, progress depends on the extent to which these rights and commitments translate into enforceable legislation and well-conceived policies, plans and programmes. The Dakar Framework for Action requests States to develop or strengthen national action plans, which are integrated into wider poverty reduction and development frameworks.[12] Many Governments are setting specific national education goals, including gender-related targets. Over the past decade, NGOs have increasingly campaigned for education and contributed to its delivery to millions of young people.

27. In the past decade, there has been growing emphasis on "life competencies" within the educational system. The introduction of such concepts as informal learning, lifelong learning, distance education, e-learning, peer education and training on the job show that the concept of education increasingly expands to forms outside the classroom. It is important that efforts be made to reach youth and young adults who have dropped out of the educational system before acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills to enhance their employability. Reporting countries also described programmes against racism and violence and promoting multicultural values and tolerance, as well as programmes aimed at educating youth in their native languages.

28. **Efforts should be made to continue the positive trend towards achieving gender equality within the educational system and, subsequently, in employment.** There is evidence that educated girls are better able to make decisions that reduce poverty in their own lives and those of their children. Public policy measures that have proved successful and should be promoted include: creating an enabling environment for promoting female education through legislative and policy reform; redistributing resources to meet girls' specific educational needs; reforming curricula; providing incentives to families to make sending children to school a worthwhile proposition; increasing the number of educational facilities in underserved areas; improving teacher training; confronting violence; working with parents; providing school meal programmes; increasing the presence of female teachers; providing separate sanitation facilities for girls; providing school-based health education; and raising the minimum age of marriage. Such interventions require a strong public commitment from the State, albeit with the support of other non-State actors.

29. **The importance of teachers and trainers should be recognized in the context of attaining quality education for all.** Attention should be given to the education of teachers and their working conditions, career paths and wages that would make the profession more attractive.

30. **Governments are encouraged to introduce and/or implement systems for validation of informal learning for young people.** This would recognize

knowledge and experience gained outside the classroom and demonstrate the correlation between formal and informal learning.

3. Employment

31. Labour force participation rates for young people decreased in the world as a whole by almost four percentage points between 1993 and 2003. This is mainly the result of an increase in the number of young people attending school and staying longer in the educational system, generally high unemployment rates, and because some young people drop out of the labour force as they lose hope of finding work. International Labour Organization (ILO) figures show that youth unemployment in the world increased from 11.7 per cent in 1993 to an historical high of 14.4 per cent (88 million) in 2003.[13] In 2003, youth unemployment was highest in Western Asia and North Africa (25.6 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (21 per cent) and lowest in East Asia (7 per cent) and the industrialized economies (13.4 per cent). There is a general movement towards the convergence of gender differences in labour force participation rates, although unemployment rates are still higher for women than for men in all developing regions, except in East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Thanks to concerted efforts by Governments, civil society organizations and the international community, child labour appears to be on the decline throughout the world.

32. While the number of youth in secondary and tertiary education has increased, labour markets in many countries are not able to accommodate this large group of skilled young graduates. This is partly due to a failure in many countries to closely link the educational system to the needs of the labour market, but is also a result of the large numbers of youth now reaching working age. In the absence of opportunities in the formal labour market, young people are also turning to so-called "forced entrepreneurship" and self-employment in the informal sector, working in often hazardous conditions for low pay and with few prospects for the future. A combination of these factors can cause young workers to become disillusioned and alienated. Young people are also a very significant group among the 175 million global migrants, adding to the brain drain.[14]

33. There has been increasing concern among policy makers that the frustration that accompanies long-term unemployment among groups of young urban men feeds political and ideological unrest and violence. It has also been argued that unemployed and idle youth who have emerged in society as part of a large "demographic bulge" may question government authority and endanger its stability. It has been argued that these disaffected individuals will engage in national and international terrorism. It should be remembered, however, that only a very small number of individuals are engaged in such activities and that they are not necessarily young, and that causality between youth unemployment and terrorism has not been established.

34. The last decade has witnessed an increased international commitment to addressing youth employment. In 1995, Governments endorsed special attention to youth unemployment at the World Summit for Social Development.[15] Six years later, youth organizations adopted the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy at the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system.[16] In 2000, the Millennium Declaration resolved to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work, a target

which was subsequently integrated into the Millennium Development Goals.[17] Goal 8, aimed at establishing a global partnership for development, explicitly refers to creating employment opportunities for young people. A high-level policy youth employment network was established in order to initiate action on the ground, and the youth employment issue has subsequently gained momentum at the national level. Recommendations based on the four global policy priorities of employability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunity and employment creation were developed in 2001 by a panel of experts appointed by the Secretary-General. The youth employment network now supports 10 lead countries committed to national youth employment strategies and a number of other countries that are preparing to do so.

35. Moreover, several poverty reduction strategy papers have specifically elaborated on youth employment strategies through entrepreneurial training, microcredit schemes, vocational training and career guidance, youth leadership training, labour intensive programmes targeted at youth and information and communication technologies skills training. At the country level, several national human development reports have been devoted to youth, and others have dedicated sections on national youth employment initiatives and policies.

36. Although many Governments have encouraged the concepts of entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth, there are relatively few microfinancing initiatives specifically targeted at youth. Most of these initiatives are implemented by NGOs or private banks. Many NGOs have provided youth training programmes aimed at enhancing life skills, job training and entrepreneurial skills. Many initiatives that are undertaken appear too small in scale and lacking in resources to tackle the full scope of the youth unemployment problem. **In order to have a real impact on poverty reduction, the challenge at the national and international levels is to "scale up" the successful aspects of these initiatives. Therefore, there is a need to increase financial commitments to youth employment initiatives.**

B. Youth in civil society: environment, leisure and participation

37. Youth are an integral part of civil society. Participation in civil society activities assures that youth are engaged in shaping their future. Young people need to be involved in decision-making processes that help to shape their own socio-economic environment. In the past 10 years, there have been three distinct developments that have changed the way in which young people's socialization and participation take place. First, the role of youth in society is being influenced by a new, and to a large extent media-driven, global youth culture, which was brought about by the rapid growth of new information and communication technologies that were still largely unknown when the World Programme of Action was adopted. Second, there has also been a large number of national and international armed conflicts in which a disproportionate number of young people have participated. Finally, the ageing of societies has profound consequences for intergenerational relations. These three new topics will be discussed in the annex to the present report. The three original priority areas of the World Programme of Action that relate to the role of young people in civil society, namely those of environment, leisure, and participation, will be discussed first.

1. Youth and the environment

38. Recognizing that they will bear the consequences of current environmental policies, young people continue to have a strong interest in protecting and preserving the planet's resources. As demonstrated through their contributions to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, young people are strong advocates for environmental preservation. Accordingly, the Plan of Implementation adopted at the Summit indicated the need to promote and support youth participation in programmes and activities relating to sustainable development. **The mobilization and support of local youth organizations will be critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability.**

39. Throughout the Summit process, young people also advocated for renewed commitment to education for sustainable development. The General Assembly proclaimed the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development beginning 1 January 2005.[18] The draft International Implementation Scheme sets out a broad framework for all partners, including youth, to contribute to the Decade. Environmental education has grown steadily in the last decade and is strengthened by several regional and national professional associations of environmental educators. Young people are increasingly disseminating information on environmental issues via their own channels.

40. The difficulty in achieving effective environmental education remains in translating environmental values into action of any kind, be it in terms of lifestyle adjustments or political action. This highlights the need for information on environmental issues to lead to functional and action-orientated outcomes. One such example is the "Clean up the world" campaign that inspires more than 40 million volunteers in over 100 countries each year to take action to improve their local environment. These volunteers include millions of young people, and the campaign represents a practical way for youth to take responsibility for their immediate environment in a voluntary setting.

41. Youth continues to be involved in implementing environmental projects, and the experience they have gained qualifies them for increased participation in decision-making about environmental policies. Youth participation in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development set the pace for participation by youth groups in other global conferences, culminating in their relatively high profile in the World Summit on Sustainable Development. **Increasing the participation of youth in environmental protection depends on strengthening opportunities for young people to participate in the decision-making of government-supported organizations and NGOs.**

2. Leisure

42. The last decade has seen a shift in awareness of the importance of leisure time activities in the development of a young person. There is growing recognition of the vital contribution that discretionary time can make for young people in terms of promoting social inclusion, access to opportunities and overall development. As underlined in the World Youth Report 2003, terms such as "leisure", "informal learning" and "play" imply a casualness of purpose and practice that does not do justice to the way in which a majority of young people use their free time. Young people's leisure time and volunteer activities relate directly to many of the issues

affecting them, such as education and employment. They are increasingly seeking and finding new ways to spend their free time, out of both necessity and interest.

43. Threats to the well-being of a young person, such as HIV/AIDS, delinquency, conflict and drug abuse, are very much linked to the projects and programmes that may or may not be available during their discretionary hours. Given such interconnections, it is critical that leisure time activities continue to be discussed in the overall context of youth development and their participation in their community and society.

44. The International Year of Volunteers in 2001 played an important part in broadening the traditional perceptions on the nature, role and contributions of the volunteer activities of young people. By the end of 2001, there was general consensus in the international community that the canvas of volunteerism encompassed, but was much broader, than leisure time activities. Youth volunteer in a number of ways, not only through formal service organizations, but also through mutual aid systems, particularly prevalent in developing countries, as well as through activism. **In order to sustain the momentum generated by the International Year of Volunteers 2001, the power of volunteerism to engage young people and to promote action will be a key contributor to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.**

45. In many industrialized countries, cuts in government subsidies for leisure activities, sport, music and art instruction have endangered many valuable extra-curricular activities in and out of schools. The loss of these opportunities is leading to greater numbers of latchkey children, who either return home to empty apartments or houses or roam the streets. While some young people are initiating projects to compensate where public programmes fall short, they need assistance to support their participation, such as supervision, provision of meeting places and access to other public facilities. Leisure activities that positively engage youth are particularly important, as statistics show that youth who are engaged in volunteer experiences are more likely to continue to volunteer in their later years. Some studies in North America show that youth who volunteer are more likely to do well in school and to vote. **The leisure needs of young people ought to be considered in the processes of urban planning and rural development in order to ensure the availability of a range of constructive, voluntary activities and opportunities for youth.**

46. Sport improves physical health, contributes to the development of a positive self-concept, social skills and values, such as teamwork and tolerance. Furthermore, sport is a universal language that can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status. It cuts across barriers that divide societies, making it a powerful tool to support working with young people for conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, both symbolically on the global level and, very practically, within communities. **Well designed sport-based initiatives are practical and cost-effective tools to achieve objectives in development and peace.**

47. An increasing number of variables determine how young people make use of the time spent outside of school or work. Universally high levels of youth unemployment and the rising costs associated with higher education often mean that young people must use their limited number of leisure hours to constantly improve their skills and employability. Therefore, an increasing number of young people tend

to view leisure hours as an unaffordable luxury because they misuse any free time to either improve their skills or to earn income to finance their studies. Spare hours are often spent in activities that promote school-to-work transitions through career exploration and preparation. This trend helps to explain the continued decrease in memberships in sports associations and other organized forms of leisure activities. Some young people have fewer opportunities to undertake leisure activities for pure enjoyment or interest, as limited work opportunities require more youth to be very competitive and to use their leisure activities to build networks that could lead to job opportunities.

48. Information and communication technologies have also affected leisure time habits, as larger portions of socializing now take place through text messaging and on-line meetings. A national survey in the United States found that 91 per cent of adolescents aged 18 to 19 use the Internet to e-mail friends or relatives, while 83 per cent use it for instant messaging. A recent study in the United Kingdom found that 94 per cent of youth have a mobile phone, and that half of the roughly 10 billion text messages sent in 2003 were by the young.[19] Cell phone users are getting younger, and teenagers are spending more money on mobile phones every year. In 2001, the total number of mobile phone subscribers in the world stood at 860 million.[20] On average, 80 per cent of young people in the European Union use a mobile phone weekly.[21] In China, nearly 60 per cent of cell phone subscribers are between 20 and 30 years of age.

49. Some of these trends include the displacement of traditional activities, such as sport. A Norwegian study shows that children and young people are spending less time on physical activities, sport or games, and that only 47 per cent of all young people aged 20 to 24 engage in physical training of any kind every 14 days or more.[22] The habits developed by using modern technology may create a culture of "individualized leisure time", as young people increasingly devote their free time to computer screens and mobile keypads.

3. Youth and participation in decision-making

50. The past decade has seen a growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in decision-making, as successful efforts by Governments to engage youth have led to better policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Youth inclusion strengthens their commitment to and understanding of human rights and democracy. Opportunities for youth participation in home, school and community development are especially crucial in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as in protecting the rights of girls and young women. The traditional slogan of "youth are the future" fails to take into account that youth are very active contributors to their societies today. Almost all parts of the United Nations system now have youth engagement strategies and frameworks. **These efforts could be further strengthened by a more widespread inclusion of youth representatives in national delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, particularly at the sixtieth session commemorating the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action.**

51. Yet, as beneficial as youth participation in decision-making is to both policy-making and youth development, it is not always effectively practised. Effective youth participation requires changes in how societies perceive young people. These changes need to be reflected in appropriate funding, in innovative ways to spread

information, in training to facilitate intergenerational collaboration and in organizational structures that welcome new voices. Levels of effective youth engagement range from manipulation and tokenism at one end, to full-fledged youth-designed and implemented programmatic responses at the other. Effective strategies for youth participation must move away from ad hoc activity-based approaches to inclusion in core aspects of social structures, institutions and processes. **Efforts should be undertaken to foster intergenerational relationships and support the capacity of young people to participate meaningfully in programmes and activities that affect them.** Efforts should be made to ensure that as many young people as possible have the opportunity to represent their age group. Girls and young women in particular may need additional support to overcome social, cultural, and economic barriers to their full participation.

52. Current national efforts to include youth in decision-making must also recognize the changes occurring in the patterns and structures of youth movements. In many countries, political parties are having difficulty attracting young members. Campaigns that encourage youth to vote seek to reverse the trend of reduced political interest by young people. Apathy towards politics and a lack of interest to participate in traditional youth organizations seem to characterize the younger generations of many countries. To many young people, the world of politics is too distant from their daily realities of school, leisure and finding work. Many youth fail to see a connection between those realities and the impact that politics has on their daily lives. Also, very few politicians can claim to represent their age group in democratically elected constituencies. Although participation in formal, membership-based associations is considered a key mechanism to enable genuine social inclusion, there is a marked difference between countries with a strong tradition of youth membership-based organizations and those without such structures.

53. Low voter turnout and membership in political parties should not lead to the conclusion that young people are not interested in the political future of their societies. Although student movements are linked to campuses and teaching facilities, the range of student-driven causes continues to expand beyond concerns of educational reform and funding cuts to include democratic reforms, employment and health issues, racism, arms proliferation and environmental concerns, to name a few. Student movements have played crucial roles in major social and political transitions of several countries in the last 10 years and are likely to continue to be at the forefront of democratization and progressive social action.

54. In many countries, national, regional and local youth councils are outlets for major political and civic participation for youth. Youth councils and forums, which may vary in structure and mandate, have been the traditional channels of cooperation and exchange of information with the national government and other decision makers. Yet this traditional model is under pressure; it depends substantially on stable public funding, an advantage that is no longer guaranteed and not commonly available to youth organizations in developing countries or countries in transition. To receive funding, many youth organizations must be results-focused and project-driven. Formal youth councils are also often perceived to mirror the political structures currently in place. Therefore, some youth feel they are asked to participate in the very same structures that, in their mind, exclude them.

55. Accordingly, Governments and international organizations should seek to work with a broad range of the youth population, both those organized through formal youth organizations and those who are not. Some studies indicate that there is an increasing tendency towards a change in motivation of membership in formal youth organizations: many members have a pragmatic rather than an ideological interest in their activities. Membership is increasingly viewed as a way to forward a young person's career or other prospects rather than an opportunity to advance youth-driven ideas and policies. This may reflect the increasing competitiveness of the job market and the need for young people to expand their networks. Explicit efforts must be made to include those young people who face obstacles, such as cultural norms that favour hierarchical relationships between generations, economic circumstances that prevent them from participating in anything other than income-generating activity and lack of access to information and necessary skills.

56. While the importance of voluntary work and its role in a young person's life has not diminished, it has changed. Youth participation today tends to be issue-specific and service-oriented. Reluctant to join a formal organization or council, many young people prefer to find open opportunities created by communities and institutions to become involved in the issues that concern them. As a result, there are emerging forms of youth structures that tend to be based on networks of collaboration and common interests. One example that seems to reverse the decline in traditional participation and civic engagement by youth is Internet-based activities in youth civic and political engagement. Through cross-boundary web sites, tele- and video-conferencing, chat boards and webcams, information and communication technologies are creating new forms of "cyber participation" that provide young people with creative, open and non-hierarchical channels of participation. Insight can be obtained when these activities are subsequently submitted to policy-making channels. More youth are gradually becoming aware of resources outside their communities and of opportunities to share and reinforce each other's work. **These new modes of participation, although not substitutes for strong and effective youth councils, can provide opportunities for more young people to become active in decision-making and in shaping their societies.**

C. Youth at risk: health, drugs, delinquency, and discrimination against girls and young women

57. Most young people manage well the transition from protected childhood to independent adulthood. With the support of family, school and peers, the majority of youth eventually find a meaningful place in society as young adults. A minority of young people diverge from this path; some become engaged in risky behaviour that can damage their social position and their health. Many young people are exploring their sexuality, and for some this exploration has certain embedded risks. Some youth experiment with drugs or venture into some type of delinquency, mostly of a temporary duration. These transitional risks have not changed much through the generations, and they remain of primary concern to most young people today. However, since the adoption of the World Programme of Action, the threat of infection with HIV has gained widespread attention. The impact of HIV/AIDS will be discussed in the annex to the present report. Other major developments that relate to young people's health, drug use and delinquent behaviour, three of the topics of

the World Programme of Action, as well as some special concerns to young women and girls, will be discussed below.

1. Health

58. Health may be defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Because youth are a relatively healthy segment of the population, their health needs have generally been overlooked, except for their reproductive health. When they do suffer poor health, it is often a result of the effects of accidents, injuries caused by armed conflict, violence, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Extreme poverty and malnutrition make some youth vulnerable to disease. Accidents and injuries are major causes of youth morbidity, mortality and disability.

59. Although early pregnancy has declined in many countries, it is still a major concern, especially because of the health risks for both mother and child and the impact on girls' education and life prospects. Births to females below age 20 account for 17 per cent of all births in the least-developed countries, which equals 14 million births worldwide each year.[23] One female in three in developing countries gives birth before age 20, and 55 per cent of all females in West Africa give birth before age 20. Pregnancy is a leading cause of death for females aged 15 to 19, with complications of childbirth and unsafe abortion being the major factors.

60. Young people worldwide are reaching puberty at earlier ages and marrying later. Premarital sex is becoming more widespread. Despite a trend towards later marriage in much of the world, millions of girls are still expected to marry and begin childbearing in their teens, often before they are ready to do so. Data for the late 1990s show that among young women who were sexually active by age 20, only 51 per cent in Africa and 45 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean initiated sexual activity prior to marriage. By contrast, the corresponding proportion for males was 90 per cent in Africa and 95 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in many developed countries, most men and women initiate sexual activity prior to marriage.

61. In both developed and developing countries, many who become sexually active at a young age do not know how to protect themselves during sexual activity. Young women are often unable to negotiate condom use with male partners and may fear violence if they try to do so. One third of new cases of curable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) each year — more than 100 million — are among women and men below age 25. Having an untreated STD significantly increases the risk of HIV infection.

62. Youth is a challenging time of life. However, when conflict erupts, risks associated with this period increase, especially for young women. Anxiety, depression, stress and suicide present disturbing aspects of youth health, especially prevalent in countries ravaged by war, occupation or sanctions. Trauma and lack of social support and services may seriously affect young people and cause lasting harm to their physical and mental health. When social structures break down in the face of war and instability, young adults frequently engage in high-risk drug use or high-risk sexual behaviour.

63. During the past 10 years, countries have made significant progress in addressing the issues of adolescent reproductive health, including the need for

information, education and services that will enable young people to prevent unwanted pregnancy and infection. These efforts are increasingly being undertaken as part of a wider, holistic approach that aims to reach young people in diverse situations and equip them with skills to shape their own future.

64. Drawing on the experience of the past 10 years, a comprehensive approach to youth health programming has emerged as a global consensus that links reproductive health interventions to efforts to provide adolescents with choices and options through investment in education, job training and citizenship development. Health education, including life skills, should be introduced into school curricula and programmes designed for out-of-school youth. Investing in young people's health, education and skills development, and empowering girls to stay in school, delay pregnancy and marry later, are essential interventions that can substantially improve their chances of becoming well informed, productive citizens. **Youth health programmes and policies should be interdisciplinary and reach beyond the health sector. Efforts need to be scaled up to adequately confront the enormous health challenges facing the world's youth.**

65. Encouraging the full participation of youth in the development and promotion of health-related programmes and policies would enable them to become agents of change in their communities and positively affect their lives and those of their peers. Youth who do not have a nurturing family environment or for whom the family is the setting for abuse or neglect should be especially targeted.

66. **Health workers should be provided with specific training to be better able to communicate with young people to provide youth-friendly services and to build competence in handling the health concerns of young people.** They should learn how to deal with substance abuse among young people, vaccination and nutrition, chronic conditions, trauma and other health problems that may begin in youth and affect their well-being during adulthood.

67. Young people have called for increased access to national and international resources in order to establish formal and informal educational programmes on HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and sexual, reproductive and mental health. **There is a need for Governments to facilitate improved access for youth to health information and services, including sexual and reproductive health services.**

2. Drugs

68. Adolescence is a period characterized by a search for independence from parents and other adults, seeking close friendships with peers and experimentation with a range of ideas, products and lifestyles. This experimentation sometimes involves taking increased risks and making choices and compromises as well as taking advantage of opportunities that may lead to uncertain outcomes. The use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol may become a means of escaping from situations that youth often feel powerless to change.

69. Tobacco use is one of the chief preventable causes of death in the world. There are an estimated 1 billion smokers in the world today. By 2030, another billion young adults will have started to smoke.[24] The highest rates of smoking among youth are in developing countries. There are fewer women smokers than men, but the number of young women taking up cigarettes is growing. The higher level of tobacco use among girls suggests that there is a need for specific policies and

programmes for girls to counteract marketing strategies that target young women by associating tobacco use with independence, glamour and romance.

70. It appears that young people in many countries are beginning to drink alcohol at earlier ages. Research in developed countries has found early initiation of alcohol use to be associated with a greater likelihood of both alcohol dependence and alcohol-related injury later in life. Boys are more likely than girls to drink alcohol and to drink heavily. However, in several European countries, levels of drinking among young women have started to equal, or even surpass, those of young men. Data on drinking among young people in developing countries are relatively scarce. Some studies point to an increase in drinking in Latin American countries, especially among young women.

71. Despite efforts to restrict the advertising and marketing of alcohol and tobacco in industrialized countries, the youth market remains a major focus of the alcohol and tobacco industries. Recent curbs on such marketing in industrialized countries have led these companies to increasingly concentrate on young people in developing countries and countries in transition, where many protective measures have not yet been taken, and where, unfortunately, fewer health and safety protections are available to young people.

72. Growing alcohol and drug abuse in many countries has contributed to high mortality and the increased risk of contracting HIV among children and young people. In some Central Asian countries, the proportion of the population who inject drugs is estimated to be up to 10 times higher than that in many Western European countries. In Central Asia and Eastern Europe, up to 25 per cent of those who inject drugs are estimated to be less than 20 years of age, and the use of all types of drugs has increased significantly among young people across the region since the early 1990s.[25] Smoking has risen as well among both boys and girls. Survey data show that 6 in 10 15-year-old boys in some countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States reported having been drunk on at least two occasions in 2001.

73. Of all illicit substances listed in international drug control treaties, cannabis is by far the most widely and most frequently used, especially among young people. However, the upward trend flattened in many countries in Europe over the last few years, and in 2003, for the first time in a decade, there was a net decline in cannabis use in some of these countries. In some Asian countries, data show that increasing numbers of young women are using illicit drugs. Female injecting drug users are increasingly involved in the sex trade. In some Asian countries, the age of initiation of drug use is declining.

74. A major change since the adoption of the World Programme of Action is the emergence of abuse of synthetic drugs. Despite efforts by many countries to limit the availability of amphetamine-type stimulants, there has been increased availability of a number of newer synthetic drugs. In most countries, stimulants such as ecstasy are consumed by young people in a recreational setting, often linked to dance events. In developing countries, such consumption is mainly associated with youth with high income, while in developed countries consumption is spread across all social classes. There are indications that ecstasy use among young adults continues to rise.

75. In the formulation of prevention strategies, the relationship and linkages between the consumption of different types of drugs, alcohol and tobacco should be

reconsidered. **For programmes and policies to be effective and credible in preventing drug abuse, particularly long-term and high risk drug-taking, they must take into account and address the underlying factors that cause young people to initiate drug abuse.**

76. **A more comprehensive approach to drug policy would increase restrictions on the marketing of tobacco and alcohol and emphasize demand reduction efforts that appeal to youth.** Demand reduction is a critical component in any drug control strategy, and national efforts should promote healthy lifestyles and education in collaboration with young people and their communities.

77. **Special strategies are needed for youth at high risk of abusing drugs. They should include youth from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, refugees and displaced persons, injecting drug users and sex workers.** Initiatives to address drug use must take place within the overall strategy to reduce poverty, increase social inclusion across all sectors in society and make the benefits of economic growth accessible to all. Prevention and treatment interventions at the community level, as well as policies setting minimum drinking age laws and taxation on alcohol have proven effective in some countries.

78. Taxation may be an effective means to reduce youth alcohol consumption. Young drinkers tend to have limited budgets and their alcohol consumption is sensitive to price changes. Increases in alcohol taxes in some developed countries, along with other preventive measures, have been shown to be effective in reducing drinking and the potentially harmful consequences of drinking, such as traffic casualties and violence.

3. Juvenile delinquency

79. Juvenile delinquency covers a range of different violations of legal and social norms, ranging from minor offences to severe crimes committed by minors. Quite often youth take advantage of illegal opportunities and get involved in crime, substance abuse and violent acts against others, especially their peers. Statistically young people constitute the most criminally active segment of the population, although eventually most young people will desist from criminal and deviant activity.

80. Young people who live in difficult circumstances are often at risk of becoming delinquent. Poverty, dysfunctional families, substance abuse and the death of family members have been demonstrated to be risk factors for becoming delinquent. Insecurity due to an unstable social environment increases vulnerability, and young people with poorly developed social skills are less able to protect themselves against the negative influences of a peer group.

81. An overwhelming majority of those who participate in violence against young people in developed countries are about the same age and sex as their victims. In most cases the offenders are males acting in groups. Those most likely to suffer from violence are between the ages of 16 and 19.[26] Police records indicate that the crime rates of juvenile and young adult male offenders are more than double those of females, and conviction rates are six or seven times higher.

82. Countries with economies in transition have witnessed a dramatic rise in delinquency rates. Since 1995, juvenile crime levels in many of these countries have increased by more than 30 per cent. Juvenile delinquency is often highly correlated

with alcohol and drug abuse. In Africa, delinquency tends to be attributed primarily to hunger, poverty, malnutrition and unemployment.

83. Urban crime rates tend to be higher than those in rural areas, which may be attributable to differences in social control and cohesion. Many of the urban poor live in slums and squatter settlements with overcrowded, unhealthy housing and a lack of basic services.

84. Delinquency is largely a group phenomenon: the majority of all juvenile offences are committed by members of some form of delinquent group. Even those juveniles who commit offences alone are likely to be associated with groups. In some countries, youth gang activity grew in the 1990s as gang cultures were popularized through the media and as economic factors and a drop in economic opportunities led to an increase in poverty in urban areas. Involvement in delinquent groups works to determine the behaviour of members and cuts off individuals from conventional pursuits. The likelihood of becoming a victim of violence is much higher for gang members than it is for members of other peer groups. One study found that involvement in gang fights increased the likelihood of becoming a victim of violence by more than threefold.[27]

85. There is a preference for social rather than judicial approaches to dealing with young offenders in a number of United Nations instruments. The Riyadh Guidelines assert that the prevention of juvenile delinquency is an essential part of overall crime prevention in society, and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) recommend instituting positive measures to strengthen a juvenile's overall well-being and reduce the need for State intervention.[28] It is widely believed that early phase intervention represents the best approach to preventing juvenile delinquency, and the prevention of recurring crime is best achieved through restorative justice.

86. A spectrum of policy options is available to address juvenile delinquency and crime from two opposing viewpoints, either to "deter and incapacitate" or to "engage and rehabilitate" young offenders. The Beijing Rules spell out that "wherever possible, detention pending trial shall be replaced by alternative measures, such as close supervision, intensive care or placement within a family or in an educational setting or home".[29] The danger of further criminal contamination while juveniles remain in detention pending trial should encourage the development of new and innovative measures to avoid such pre-trial detention. Law enforcement is not the only answer to antisocial behaviour by young people, just as purely preventive or suppressive efforts are not very effective for youth already in contact with law enforcement. There is some evidence that community-based programmes are valuable alternatives to the incarceration of youth. On the other hand, the detention of a small group of repeat offenders known to have committed the majority of registered offences does appear to have had a positive impact on crime rates.

87. Young delinquents often suffer from social and economic exclusion. There is a strong reinforcing and reciprocal link between low crime rates and social inclusion and control. Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase in effective practices that promote community safety and reduce crime in urban settings, which includes knowledge about a range of practices. Many of these programmes are effectively targeted to young people most at risk, or those living in areas of high risk and range from early childhood interventions, educational programmes, youth leadership,

mediation and job and skills training to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. **To prevent violent behaviour and address delinquency, communities have to adopt strategies that combine such actions as prevention and intervention, as well as suppression.**

88. Regardless of the many changes that have taken place in the composition and structure of families globally, the family, as the primary institution of socialization of youth, continues to play an important role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency and underage crime. The most effective prevention efforts focus on the families of troubled youths, including those young people with serious behavioural problems.

4. Girls and young women

89. Gender discrimination and stereotyping continue to limit the full development and access to services of girls and young women. Education improves the social and economic equality of young women, yet 65 million girls still remain out of school worldwide.[30] Five million women aged 15-19 have abortions every year, 40 per cent of which are performed under unsafe conditions.[31] Studies researching young people's understanding of AIDS-related issues found that while both sexes were vastly uninformed, the level of unawareness was particularly high for girls aged 15-19 years. In almost all regions, young women fare worse than young men in indicators of labour market status.

90. Without gender parity in such key areas as education, health and employment, the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Declaration will not be achieved or sustained. **Gender analysis and awareness must be incorporated into all strategies undertaken to address the priorities of the World Programme of Action for Youth.**

91. Violence continues to be perpetrated against girls and young women worldwide. Physical and sexual abuse affect millions of girls and women, yet these incidents are seriously underreported. In some African countries, more than half of all women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation; its prevalence has not yet seen a significant decline. Women and girls comprise half of the world's refugees and, as refugees, are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.[32] **Governments must enact and enforce legislation protecting girls and young women from all forms of violence.** Particular attention should be paid to preventive measures regarding female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, genital mutilation, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography. There exists a strong need to develop age-appropriate safe and confidential programmes, as well as medical, social and psychological support services to assist girls who are subjected to violence.

92. Stereotyping and discrimination also limit the full participation of girls and young women in society, including civil society activities. Both traditional and web-based media continue to propagate stereotypes that often objectify young women and encourage restrictive ideas about their roles in society. Young people themselves must continue to be made aware of the harmful impact of gender barriers imposed by cultural beliefs, perceived roles and traditional practices so that they can practice equality. **Governments and international and non-governmental organizations should provide access for girls and young women to training, information and media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to**

articulate their views. Non-governmental organizations, in particular youth organizations, must be supported in their efforts to promote the equality and participation of girls in society.

III. Concluding recommendations: new inputs for global youth policy

93. With over 200 million youth living in poverty, 130 million youth illiterate, 88 million unemployed and 10 million young people living with HIV/AIDS, the case for a renewed commitment to the goals of the World Programme of Action is clear. **While some progress has been achieved in a number of priority areas of the Programme of Action, this report has demonstrated that the current generation of young people is facing ever more complex challenges than the previous generation.**

94. The dichotomy between youth in developed and developing countries is becoming less pronounced with urbanization, globalization and the emergence of a global media-driven youth culture. Although the 1.2 billion young people worldwide continue to be diverse and heterogeneous in their needs and aims, their values and identities are becoming increasingly similar. Rising out of poverty will remain a huge challenge in many young people's lives, and the diversity of global youth will remain substantial for many more decades. Yet, overwhelmingly, most young people share values of democracy and peace.

95. Too often, youth policies are driven by negative stereotypes of young people, including delinquency, drug abuse and violence. However, most young people do not engage in these activities, and most of those who do will eventually desist. Instead, young people should be seen as essential partners for building a society of the future. Governments at all levels are encouraged to develop and implement integrated youth policies, making linkages between the different priority areas for youth development. The priority areas of the World Programme of Action have an impact on each other. **Therefore, there is a strong case for Governments to develop holistic and integrated youth policies. There is also a continued need to pay special attention to various disadvantaged groups of young people in follow-up action on the World Programme of Action.** These would include the special needs of young people with disabilities, young migrants and indigenous youth, among others.

96. **Governments should continuously evaluate their youth policy, and involve young people in the evaluation.** Conditions for young people have been subject to rapid changes, and policy makers may fail to reflect the current challenges of youth, believing the experiences of the current generation of youth to be similar to their own. Effective evaluation of the situation of young people must include young people. Such inclusion would increase the commitment of young people to the policies that affect them, and would create greater opportunities for cooperation and true youth participation.

97. **This report, as well as the Global Plan for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, has demonstrated that there is a strong need to scale up investments in youth.** To address the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and HIV/AIDS among youth, interventions that have successfully

addressed these problems on a small scale should be replicated and supported by increased funding. Investing in youth starts with children, and intensified commitment and investment now in the child-focused Millennium Development Goals will have enormous benefits for the young people in 2015. There is thus great value in the integration of policies for children and youth, an action that some countries have already taken. Therefore, Governments should see young people as partners in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The energy and potential of young people to contribute to poverty alleviation, maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS among their peers in the poorest regions of the world needs to be unleashed.

98. **A set of verifiable indicators, some of which could be drawn from the Millennium Development Goals that relate to youth, would allow for better measurement of progress achieved for young people in the future.** Whereas the World Programme of Action for Youth has been instrumental in setting a global agenda for young people on the basis of 10 priority areas in 1995, it did not specifically provide for a set of verifiable indicators on those priorities that could be used to monitor the progress achieved in those priorities. An example of such an indicator could be a youth development index, which would compile specific data on youth health, educational status and income in various countries and which would allow measurement of progress in the priority areas of the World Programme of Action. Another example could be the tracking of some of the youth-related indicators of the total of 48 indicators that have been established to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. **At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly may consider requesting the Secretariat to develop a suitable set of indicators, which could be used by Governments and other actors to measure progress achieved by 2015.**

99. **The General Assembly may consider endorsing the five new issues of concern that it previously noted, and that are discussed in the annex to this report, complementing the priorities of the World Programme of Action.** The information provided in this report shows the case for doing so. In the same context, to underscore the centrality of young people in reaching the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the potential of young people to help achieve them, **the General Assembly may wish to call on the organizations of the United Nations system to set in motion appropriate inter-agency arrangements that would serve to enhance synergies among relevant system activities.** The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is pursuing the matter through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination machinery and will keep the General Assembly informed of progress made. Finally, **the General Assembly may wish to call on Member States to ensure that young people form part of the official delegations to the special meetings of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session that will mark the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 2005.** While many General Assembly resolutions on youth since 1995 have encouraged youth representatives, the number of Member States that have nominated young people to be part of their official delegations has remained low. Over the past several years, there have been very positive experiences in providing for young people's participation that should be built upon, ensuring an inclusive and participatory observance of the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action.

Notes

[1] See *World Population Prospects, 2002 Revision* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.XIII.7).

[2] See E/CN.5/2003/4.

[3] The two income poverty lines are calculated from the data contained in *World Development Indicators 2004* on the proportion of people in each country below the international poverty line (United Nations population estimates). Estimates of the numbers of young people are based on figures on nutrition in UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, table 7, and United Nations population estimates. See Curtain, R., "Youth in extreme poverty: dimensions and policy implications with particular focus on South-East Asia", paper prepared as input for the World Youth Report 2005, available at www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/workshops/main.htm.

[4] See D. Gordon, S. Nandy, C. Pantazis, S. Pemberton and P. Townsend, *Child Poverty in the Developing World* (Bristol, The Policy Press, 2003).

[5] Ibid. Severe deprivation is defined as "those circumstances that are highly likely to have serious adverse consequences for the health, well-being and development of children. Severe deprivations are causally related to 'poor' developmental outcomes both long and short term". Indicators are developed for severe deprivation regarding the absence of food, water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, information and access to basic services. A child is living in absolute poverty *only* if he or she suffers from two or more severe deprivations of basic human needs.

[6] See FAO, IFAD, WFP, *Reducing Poverty and Hunger: the Critical Role of Financing for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development* (Rome, 2002); N. Majid, *Reaching Millennium Goals: How Well Does Agricultural Productivity Growth Reduce Poverty?* (Geneva, ILO, 2004).

[7] See UNESCO, "Global monitoring report on education for all", in *Quality Education for All Young People: Challenges, Trends and Priorities* (Paris, 2004).

[8] See UNESCO, *The Leap to Equality: Gender and Education for All, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/04* (Paris, 2003). Entrance into tertiary education increased by 50 per cent in developing countries between 1990 and 1997 (from 29 million to 43.4 million), while the increase in developed countries was much slower (up 13 per cent, from 39.5 million to 44.8 million); 1997 is the last year for which worldwide data are available and comparable to earlier statistics. Since 1997, different categories for the International Standard Classification of Education are being used, affecting comparability of statistics for secondary and tertiary education.

[9] See UNESCO, "Education for all, year 2000 assessment", in United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.IV.7).

[10] "Severely educationally deprived" refers to children between 7 and 18 years old who lack any primary or secondary school education, that is, they have never gone to school. See Gordon et al., op. cit.

[11] See UNESCO, op. cit.

[12] See "*Education for all: meeting our collective commitments*", adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000.

[13] Unemployment rates refer to all persons looking for work, who are neither discouraged nor voluntarily staying in education and training; See ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth* (Geneva, 2004).

[14] See United Nations, *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2003 Revision* (http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/migstock/2003TrendsMigstock.pdf).

[15] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.8).

[16] See A/C.3/56/2.

[17] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[18] See General Assembly resolution 57/254.

[19] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/marketresearch/audiencegroup2.shtml.

[20] See R. Curtain, "Promoting youth income generation opportunities through information and communication technologies (ICT): best practices in Asia and the Pacific" (Melbourne, Curtain Consulting, 2003).

[21] See http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/cceb_en.htm.

[22] See E. Mjaavatn, "Modern lifestyle: a threat to young people's life" (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1999).

[23] See UNFPA, *State of the World's Population* (New York, 2004).

[24] See P. R. Lopez, "Future worldwide health effects of current smoking patterns", in C. E. Koop and M. R. Shwarz, eds., *Critical Issues in Global Health* (San Francisco, 2001).

[25] See UNAIDS and Development Cooperation Ireland, "Breaking the barriers, partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia", paper presented at a ministerial conference, Dublin, 23 and 24 February 2004.

[26] See Germany, "First periodical report on crime and crime control in Germany" (Berlin, 2001).

[27] See R. Loeber, L. Kalb and D. Huizinga, "Juvenile delinquency and serious injury victimization", *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (Washington, D.C., United States Department of Justice, 2001).

[28] See General Assembly resolution 45/112.

[29] See General Assembly resolution 40/33.

[30] See UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2004* (New York, 2003).

[31] See UNFPA, *A Time Between: Health, Sexuality and Reproductive Rights of Young People* (New York, 1999) (United Nations publication, Sales No. 99.III.H2).

[32] United Nations, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 00.XVII.14).

Annex

Review of five new concerns since the adoption of the World Programme of Action

A. Globalization

1. Globalization, roughly defined as the global integration of economies and societies,[a] affects many aspects of young peoples' lives. Youth have an ambiguous relationship with the globalizing world, both economically and culturally. On the one hand, they are most flexible and perhaps best able to adapt to and make use of new opportunities offered. They are the best educated generation on new information technologies; they benefit from economic growth; many travel around the world for work, studies, exchange projects and vacation; and telephone and the Internet enable them to stay in touch with friends and relatives abroad. On the other hand, many youth, especially in developing countries, have been left out of the digitalization and modernization process and lack the economic power to benefit from the opportunities globalization offers. Four effects of globalization on the lives of young people are discussed below in more detail; the distribution of employment opportunities, migration, youth culture and consumerism, and global citizenship and activism.

2. Globalization can be a powerful force for poverty reduction. Many countries have seen improvements in their welfare and educational systems as a consequence of globalization. Unfortunately, about 2 billion people live in countries that do not benefit from globalization, mainly in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and the former Soviet Union.[b] These countries have seen a declining economic growth rate, loss of jobs, low incomes, and poor education and health provision. The income gap is widening not only between, but also within countries.

3. Globalization has substantially changed the job market, to which young people, as newcomers, are "most vulnerable". New technologies have replaced manual labour, mainly affecting low skilled jobs in the service sector. Even in China, which has seen remarkable economic growth, the rate of unemployment is rising due to the ongoing transformation from agriculture to the less employment-intensive manufacturing and service industries, the reform of state-owned enterprises and the reorganization of the public sector. Trade liberalization forces companies to become more flexible and competitive. Many have become increasingly dependent on low-cost, flexible labour, often employed on an irregular basis. The outsourcing of sophisticated programming assignments and semi-skilled jobs in call centres to low-wage countries is perhaps the best known example of the global shift of employment opportunities for young people.

4. Migration, both within and between countries, is another aspect of globalization. Young people have always been a significant group among migrants. As foreign investment often creates job opportunities in the cities of host countries, rural workers move to the cities. In 2003, 48 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas, and it is projected that over 50 per cent will do so by 2007.[c] In 2002, there were 175 million international migrants. On the basis of available immigration data, it is estimated that some 15 per cent, or 26 million, are youth.[d] Every day thousands of young people illegally try to pursue a life of fortune in a rich country,

often motivated by unrealistic information and high expectations. A parallel industry of illicit travel agents, job brokers and middlemen has arisen, which directs the trafficking of these migrants. The past two decades have seen a dramatic increase in the trafficking of girls and young women, who are often lured into prostitution. Young women and girls who are impoverished, uneducated or from indigenous, ethnic minority, rural or refugee groups are most vulnerable to being trafficked.

5. Globalization has numerous consequences for youth cultures. The increase in media streams has resulted in global consumerism. Through television, music videos and movies, American and European-produced content is increasingly dominating entertainment around the world. Young people tend to adopt and interpret global products in terms of their own local cultures and experiences, thereby creating new hybrid cultural forms whose meanings vary with local and national circumstances. Many youth in developing countries, as well as marginalized youth in the industrialized world, are unable to fulfil their raised expectations of material well-being. This may result in alienation and frustration and, potentially, in crime and social strife.

6. Young people around the world show concern about the negative consequences of globalization, such as unequal distribution of wealth and environmental degradation. The anti-globalization movement has expanded all over the world and comprises a heterogeneous group of non-governmental organizations, student groups, political organizations and civil rights activists. The movement fights for various issues such as global justice, fair trade, debt relief, and sustainable development. Remarkable results have been achieved in the last two decades, including in the recognition of basic universal rights and in the prevention of global threats. Despite the presence of many active youth in the international arena, it may be argued that the diverse landscape of issues, opinions, interests and beliefs among young people hampers the emergence of a strong unified voice of young people and of a global youth and student movement.

7. In order to address some of the concerns related to migration of youth, young people need to have viable alternatives to remain in their countries. This means addressing root causes such as poverty, and by doing so, seeking to redress the inequalities between rich and poor nations. **It also requires that young people are provided, through education and skills training, with the knowledge and confidence to become successful participants in the labour markets of their own countries.**

8. Most migration data is not disaggregated by age. **Data on the outflow and inflow of young nationals would be a useful supplement to an analysis of the global youth employment situation.**

B. Information and communication technologies

9. An area where young people have an edge is the emerging information society driven by new technologies. Young people are often the leading innovators in the use and spread of information and communications technologies. They adapt quickly and are generally quite hungry for the great quantities of information, locally and globally, that can be provided through emerging information and communication technologies.

10. Information and communication technologies have become a significant factor in development, having a profound impact on the political, economic and social sectors of many countries. While many equate information and communication technologies primarily with mobile and more advanced technologies, a more useful definition of information and communication technologies includes all technologies that enable the handling of information and facilitate different forms of communication. By expanding the notion of information and communication technologies to include both older and newer technologies, from newspapers, radio and television to camcorders, computers and cell phones, the full impact of information and communication technologies on the social development of youth can be better understood. The distinction between old and new technologies may become outdated as radio, television, satellite technologies and the Internet are combined in innovative ways to reach a wide range of target audiences.

11. The proliferation of information and communication technologies presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of the social development and inclusion of youth. Young people often use the Internet to access entertainment and news sites and as a personal meeting space through chat programmes. They are also making use of possibilities provided by new technologies to advance their participation in a number of civic activities. There is also an increased emphasis on using information and communication technologies in the context of global youth priorities, such as access to education, employment and poverty eradication. Yet questions remain as to whether information and communication technologies can empower young people and improve their lives or whether they are deepening the already existing inequalities and divisions in the world. The important concerns of a global "digital divide" apply as much to youth as to any other age group.

12. There are still great disparities in the distribution and use of many forms of technology. For example, 331 per 1,000 people in Europe use the Internet, while approximately 15 per 1,000 in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, 37 per 1,000 in the Middle East and Africa and 92 per 1,000 in Latin America and the Caribbean use the Internet. While these data are not youth specific, young people are among the principle users of computers and are likely highly represented in these figures. It is also important to note that the disparity is not as great in the use of older forms of technology, such as radio and television, making these media extremely useful in information distribution. For example, while 813 per 1,000 people in Europe own radios, the corresponding figures are 198 per 1,000 in sub-Saharan Africa, 277 per 1,000 in the Middle East and North Africa and 410 per 1,000 in Latin America and the Caribbean.[e]

13. Lack of access to information and communication technologies has remained a major challenge to youth. Special efforts must be made for youth in rural areas to establish connectivity, given that rapid developments in wireless technology have made it possible to overcome the physical impediments of distance and topography, at a reasonable cost, that for long have limited the development of telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas. Shared access to these services can increase their impact. In the most remote and sparsely populated areas, existing market incentives may often provide insufficient stimulus to private investment and government funding may be required. The digital divide, characterized by highly unequal access to and use of information and communication technologies, manifests itself both at the international and domestic levels and therefore needs to be addressed by national policy makers, as well as the international community.

14. There is a growing effort to promote social action and community development among young people through electronic communications, "cyber-participation" and "e-citizenship". Today, information and communication technologies and new media are becoming core components of youth civic engagement and activism. Given the existing connections between new media, the Internet and young people, it can be inferred that new media and information and communication technologies have enabled young people's activism at a general level and influenced the diverse forms it has taken. Most directly, information and communication technologies are used for communication and coordination of youth movements and for contributing to a sense of e-solidarity among individuals and groups with different agendas. Technology has also increased youth awareness of issues, problems and crises in other parts of the world. New technologies bring these issues to people in very direct ways and allow for instantaneous communication among activists. In many countries the Internet is the least-controlled medium for information, and it can be a powerful tool for activists and advocacy groups, contributing to increased transparency, the development of civil society and democracy. Lists servers, temporary and long-term web sites and collective online writing and editing of documents are common features of today's youth activism. Such tools are commonly used by young people to prepare and contribute their submissions to political processes and international meetings. **Measures to improve access to the Internet and to increase information technology literacy at large should be encouraged. The effective use of technology should help to strengthen various forms of youth engagement.**

15. When available, information and communication technologies have a potential to improve young people's access to better education. Many schools and vocational training centres are taking advantage of information and communication technologies to provide distance learning and to train teachers in new instructional methods. Digital opportunities are particularly effective in reaching rural communities that lack large libraries and other educational resources. Through information and communication technologies, curricula can be updated and distributed more effectively. Their usefulness of information and communication technologies in education depends on their proper delivery, but there are model practices of cost-effective and country-differentiated solutions to increase access to education through information and communication technologies. Technology is changing the way classrooms operate through integrating multimedia textbooks, online research, and student presentations that make the learning process more interactive and participatory.

16. Utilizing information and communication technologies to promote youth employment has expanded during the last decade. Local e-commerce may open significant livelihood opportunities for young people and smaller networks and provide young people with the opportunity to develop professionally without having to relocate from their families and support networks. At the grass-roots level, there are several examples of opportunities for entrepreneurship in information and communication technology among lower income youth. The worldwide expansion of mobile phone networks and the growth in the number of mobile phone subscribers has been phenomenal in recent years. The availability of mobile phone networks in many low and middle-income countries opens up many opportunities for young people. One common option is to purchase a mobile phone through a microcredit programme and to earn income by providing low cost phone calls to

others. Literacy, skills, and accessibility to information and communication technologies are key to using them to provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth.

17. Many young people, however, are excluded from the information revolution; others are affected by the way information and communication technologies may challenge traditional forms of socialization. Others struggle to balance influences exerted by the family and local community with those exerted by the global and cross-cultural influences of information and communication technologies. The increased use of mobile phones, for instance, has affected the daily interactions of youth almost everywhere. Information and communication technologies can be an independent factor in the lives of young people, influencing behavioural and value patterns that differ from those of older generations. In this sense, information and communication technologies create a new landscape of socialization. The succession of generations as one of the central means of transmission of traditional practices can thus be eroded. In fact, the direction of socialization can be reversed as the younger generation teaches its elders to use the emerging technologies. However, information and communication technologies and the media do not preclude influence of such traditional actors as parents and schools. The emergence of a global media-driven youth culture as propelled by information and communication technologies thus creates conditions for two-directional socialization between generations and may overturn the common assumption that young people are not full members of society until they complete the process of socialization.

18. Some critics argue that information and communication technologies implicitly carry a cultural package of values associated with Western popular culture. Yet it should be emphasized that youth culture is very much a local phenomenon as well as a global one. Young people use, adapt and interpret global products in terms of their own local cultures and experiences, and in the process they create hybrid cultural forms whose meanings vary with local circumstances. While traditional, protectionist policies in limiting new media and information and communication technologies may no longer be realistic to implement, it may be equally inadequate to adopt a liberal approach that asserts young people's access to new media without any need for protection. **To support youth in their use of information and communication technologies, a three-pronged strategy could be envisaged that aims at the adequate provision of media for young people, encourages participation by young people in the production of media in the formation of media policy and promotes education that emphasizes information and communication technology literacy as a significant dimension of contemporary citizenship.**

C. HIV/AIDS and young people

19. The current generation of young people has not known a world without AIDS. As a group they are especially vulnerable to contracting and transmitting the disease. There are 10 million young people currently living with HIV/AIDS. Of this number, 6.2 million live in sub-Saharan Africa and 2.2 million in Asia.[f] At the same time, youth who are empowered to make informed choices have greater potential and opportunity to drastically reduce the number of new infections.

20. Young people may be more likely than their elders to engage in risky behaviour, making them more susceptible to the risk of infection. Reasons range from a lack of information, peer pressure, inability to calculate risk, impaired judgement because of intoxication, inability to refuse unprotected sex and limited availability of or access to condoms.

21. Globally, almost one fourth of those living with HIV are under the age of 25. One third of women who are living with HIV are between 15 and 24 years of age. The rate of new infection is higher among young women than young men. The increase can be attributed to numerous factors, such as greater biological susceptibility, gender inequalities, sociocultural norms, lack of financial security, forced and early marriage, sexual abuse and the trafficking of young women. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, young women are two to three times more likely to be HIV positive then men. In some countries, at least one fourth of young women experienced coerced and unprotected sex, which can result in HIV transmission.[g] In Eastern Europe and Central Asia and much of Latin America, however, young men are more likely to be infected than young women. In many regions, injecting drug users and men who have sex with men are particularly at risk.

22. The vulnerability of young people to contracting HIV is particularly highlighted by the fact that young people constitute a significant percentage of high-risk groups in high-risk settings. For example, in several Asian countries, young people constitute over 60 per cent of sex workers. In Central Asia and Eastern Europe, up to 25 per cent of those who inject drugs are estimated to be less than 20 years of age.[h] In some regions, especially those with a high prevalence of drug use through injection, the age of initiation of drug use is becoming lower. Another group at high risk of HIV infection is composed of young refugees and migrants. School dropouts, a group of some 120 million school-aged children worldwide, are also disadvantaged, as they lose opportunities to learn about reproductive health and HIV in the stable and credible environment of the classroom.[i]

23. There are currently an estimated 15 million children who have been orphaned due to AIDS, having lost one or both parents to the epidemic. Twelve million of those orphans live in sub-Saharan Africa, a number that could rise to 18 million by 2010. Facing inadequate support systems and insufficient resources, they are at substantially increased risk of malnutrition, abuse, illness and HIV infection.[j]

24. **Intervention policies and programmes at the national and local levels should include life-skills-based HIV/AIDS information and education that would empower young people to make choices and decisions about their health.** In order to effectively receive the information, skills and services, young people need to be provided with a supportive environment in which they are safe from harm and supported by caring relations with their family and community.

25. **To reduce the vulnerability of young people to infection, Governments should develop accessible and affordable primary health-care services of high quality, including sexual and reproductive health care. It should be accompanied by education programmes for youth, including those related to sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS.** Community-based interventions prove to be highly effective when they specifically target marginalized young people, such as sex workers and injecting drug users, who have poor access to information and services and are at high risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS. Such policies should reflect national commitment and provide the overall context for

actions to reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS among young people, while allowing for specific interventions to take place. Policies must be based on evidence of what is effective and should be scaled up to address the true scope of the problem. Continued international cooperation and collective global efforts are necessary for the containment of HIV/AIDS. The full range of prevention options must be provided to young people and should focus not just on developing healthy lifestyles, but also on sexual health and behaviour issues. A behavioural change approach includes abstinence, encouragement to delay the start of sexual activity, reduction in the number of sexual partners, and correct, consistent condom use.

D. Youth and conflict

26. Peace and security are prerequisites for reaching the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Protection of vulnerable young people in situations of armed conflict is an immediate concern. The past decade has seen an unprecedented increase in the involvement of young people, both as victims and as perpetrators, in armed conflict. Today, there are an estimated 300,000 child and youth combatants actively involved in armed conflicts.[k]

27. A comprehensive legal framework has been developed during the last decade on the protection of youth. However, this legal framework has been confined to those who are under the age of 18.[l] The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the legal basis for ensuring children's rights. The World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted in 1990, aims to "protect children from the scourge of war and to take measures to prevent further armed conflicts, in order to give children everywhere a peaceful and secure future". A new agenda for action by the international community has been set to achieve the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Several new international instruments, such as International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, were developed. Both documents prohibit the forced and compulsory recruitment of children and youth up to age 18 in situations of conflict.

28. It remains debatable whether the progress achieved in the past decade in establishing an international legal framework for the protection of minors in armed conflicts has contributed to increased willingness among warring parties to protect children and youth. Experience from some countries in conflict does not lead to optimism that the achievements on the international political, legal and normative level are being translated to actions on the ground. However, on the basis of some key lessons of programmes dealing with youth in armed conflict, a number of recommendations could be made.

29. **It is essential to accumulate and store knowledge on effective ways of responding to the special needs of youth in armed conflict. Sharing this information for the international community in an accessible and structured way would provide better knowledge to make early interventions that could save lives.** Special attention may be given to different approaches of reintegrating youth who were victims and those who were perpetrators.

30. **The elaboration of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should include ways to tailor them towards the special needs of youth,** in particular with regard to specific information and access to these

processes for young soldiers, skill development and training at demobilization camps for young soldiers and follow up of ex-youth soldiers who have been reintegrated in their communities of origin. Evaluation and special programming for youth should incorporate a gender perspective.

31. **Devising educational measures with a focus on building skills in crisis prevention and peacebuilding could help prevent violent and armed conflicts.** This approach rests upon the growing awareness that youth are dynamic agents of peace, and instead of being part of "the problem", they should become part of the solution. The perspective emphasizes the role of young people as peacebuilders, and allows them to help sustain peace, instead of responding violently to looming conflict.

32. **The issues pertinent to the situation of youth and former child soldiers should be incorporated into peace negotiations and into programmes that aim to reintegrate them into society.** Youth participation helps to build participatory democracy and helps to achieve better outcomes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts.

33. In environments that provide few attractive options for employment, armed conflicts often have offered young people a way of generating income. **Providing opportunities for meaningful work for youth decreases the risk of young people being recruited into or voluntarily joining hostile forces.** In post-conflict situations, policies that emphasize strategies for youth employment not only help to provide a decent living for young people, but also discourage young soldiers from being re-recruited into armed conflicts. Special attention may be paid to tailoring education, vocational training and skills development to the actual labour market needs of the region where ex-youth soldiers will return. In this context, training has to go hand in hand with job creation in the informal and formal local labour market.

E. Intergenerational relations

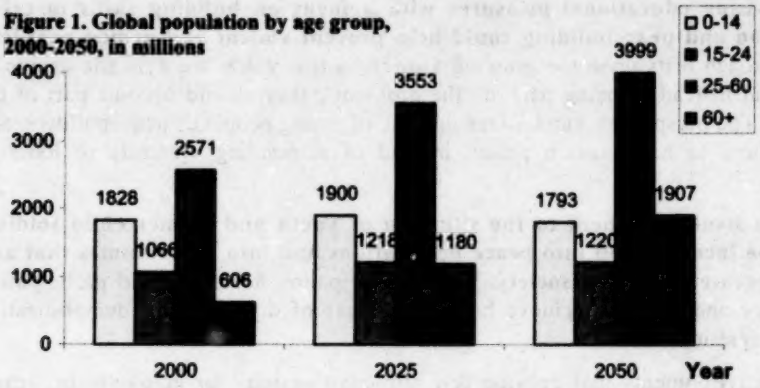
34. Before the middle of this century, older persons and youth will comprise a roughly equal share of the world's population. The proportion of those aged 60 years and over is expected to double, rising from 10 to 21 per cent between 2000 and 2050, and the proportion of those under 14 years of age will decline by a third, from 30 to 20 per cent (see figure 1).[m] The youth population will decrease from 18 to 14 per cent of the total population.[n]

35. This ageing of society is already apparent in developed countries. The process is occurring at a much higher rate in developing countries, however, and in many cases, the necessary infrastructure and policies will not be in place to deal with the consequent developments. Whereas today 6 of every 10 older persons live in a developing country, by 2050 the number will be 8 of every 10 (see figure 2). Africa remains the area with the youngest population, although its proportion of youth is expected to decline and that of older persons to double.

36. Between 2000 and 2050, global life expectancy rates are expected to increase from 65 to 74 years.[o] Consequently, families consisting of four or more generations are no longer uncommon. This raises questions as to the responsibility for individuals within the family and the capacities of government-controlled welfare systems, including old age pension and health provision. The interdependence

between younger and older people will increase in the future. **Youth development will increasingly become a prerequisite to meeting the growing care demands of older people and a condition for the development of society as a whole.**

Figure 1. Global population by age group, 2000-2050, in millions

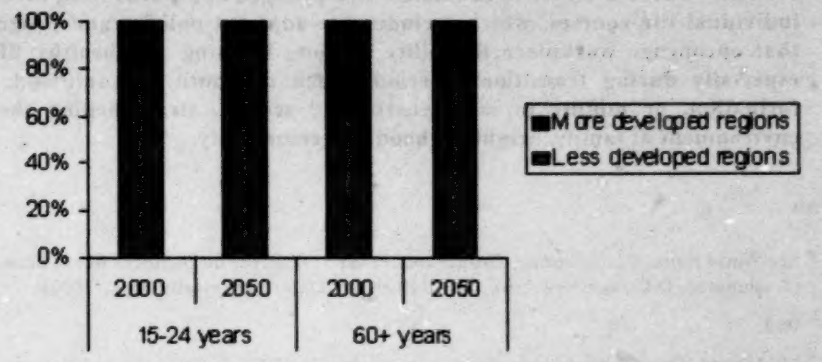


United Nations *World Population Prospects: the 2002 Revision. Volume II: Sex and Age* (New York, 2003).

37. The family continues to be the primary social institution in which different generations in society cohabit. Family structures, however, are undergoing profound changes. There has been a shift from extended to nuclear families and an increase in the number of one-person and cohabitating households. The age at first marriage has risen to the mid- to late twenties, often due to extended educational careers and delayed entry into the labour market, particularly for young women. This has been compounded by a trend towards later childbearing and having fewer children.

38. The AIDS pandemic has reversed decades of gradual gains in life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa. In the worst-affected countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, the probability of a 15-year-old dying before reaching 60 years of age has risen sharply, from 10 to 30 per cent in the mid-1980s to 30 to 60 per cent at the start of the new millennium.[p] Young people have been particularly affected by the intergenerational impact of the epidemic. The need to care for infected relatives, to cope with the loss of family members and to take care of AIDS orphans has had an extensive impact on young people and caused them to take on new roles of responsibility in their families and societies.

Figure 2. Age groups and their share in global population, 2000-2050.



United Nations *World Population Prospects: the 2002 Revision. Volume II: Sex and Age* (New York, 2003).

39. Poverty is transmitted through generations. There is a difference between life-course poverty, also known as intra-generational poverty, and intergenerational transmission of poverty. Life-course poverty denotes the ways in which a poor child or young person can grow into a poor or even poorer adult; intergenerational poverty refers to the transmittance of poverty through generations. Interventions related to education, health and employment can break the poverty cycle, and without these interventions, poverty tends to deepen with age. An intergenerational perspective adds a useful dimension when addressing global poverty. The intergenerational transmission of poverty involves both private and public spheres, the latter, for example through the taxation of income of older generations to pay for the primary education system. Transfers can be both positive, through cash assets and positive aspirations, and negative, for example through bonded labour, poor nutrition and gender discrimination. The extent to which a parent's poverty is transmitted to children is affected by the ways in which resources and care are distributed within the household and society.

40. The extent to which a young person is economically dependent, independent or depended on within the household can change extremely rapidly. This has significant implications for present and long-term well-being, both for the young person and his or her family. High youth unemployment rates prevent or delay many young people from becoming economically independent from their families.

41. Intergenerational relations also concern cultural trends. In the transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, young people create their own identity, adopting the cultural norms and values of their parents and adapting them to the society they encounter around them. The globalization of media has enlarged the scope of norms and values upon which young people draw in creating their identities. Young people are increasingly taking over aspects of cultures from around the world and incorporating them into their own identity. This may cause cultural gaps with their parents and grandparents to widen. The "intergenerational digital divide" between the young and old generations also contributes to this gap.

42. **Increased attention should be given to the socio-economic impact of ageing societies. There is a case to promote a two-pronged approach: first, investing in individual life courses, which includes age-adjusted policies and programmes that encourage workplace flexibility, lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles, especially during transitional periods, such as youth to adulthood, family formation, or midlife to later years; and second, strengthening the social environment of family, neighbourhood and community.**

Notes

[a] See World Bank, *Globalization, Growth and Poverty: Building an Inclusive World Economy* (Washington, D.C., and New York, World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2002).

[b] Ibid.

[c] See United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 04.XIII.6).

[d] See estimate based on the average age composition of the 10 largest immigration countries; based on data provided by the United Nations Statistics Division.

[e] See World Bank and International Telecommunication Union, *World Development Indicators 2004* (Washington, D.C., 2004).

[f] See UNAIDS, *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva, 2004).

[g] See UNAIDS and Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, *Violence against Women with AIDS* (Geneva, 2004).

[h] See UNAIDS and Development Cooperation Ireland, loc. cit.

[i] See Family Health International, "Reaching out-of-school youth with reproductive health and HIV/AIDS information and services", *Youth Issues Paper No. 4* (Washington, D.C., 2004).

[j] See UNAIDS, op. cit.

[k] See A/59/282.

[l] The term "child", in connection with United Nations conventions on the legal protection of children, in the majority of the cases describes all persons under the age of 18; the term "young adult soldier" describes persons between 18 and 21 years of age.

[m] See United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision Highlights* (New York, 2003).

[n] See United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*, vol. II, *Sex and Age* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.XIII.7).

[o] See United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*, vol. I, *Comprehensive Tables* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.XIII.6).

[p] See World Health Organization, *World Health Report 2004: Changing History* (Geneva, 2004).